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AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

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BULLETIN

VOLUME 4 SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, MAY, 1922 NUMBER 5

MAY MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 11th inst., at eight o'clock, in the Assembly Hall of the Public Library, corner McAllister and Larkin Sts. Take elevator to third floor. Car lines No. 5 or No. 19.

The Association is fortunate in having received from Dr. Casey Wood, specialist in ophthalmology, Fellow of the London Zoological Society and Associate Member of the American Ornithologist's Union, a series of comments and observations, which, for lack of a better title, might be termed "Random Notes of a Naturalist in the British West Indies and Guiana." These notes will constitute the feature of the meeting. They are rich in local color and abound in references to the picturesque and interesting bird life of these regions. Visitors will be made welcome.

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MAY FIELD TRIP will be taken on Sunday, May 14th, to Lafayette, Contra Costa County. San Francisco members will take 8:00 a. m. Key Route Ferry and Sacramento Short Line (Oakland & Antioch) train at the mole. East Bay members may take train at College and Shafter Avenues, Oakland, at 8:35 a. m. Purchase round trip tickets to Lafayette; fare from San Francisco, $1.15; from Oakland, 95c. Bring lunch and drinking water. Leader, Miss S. Edith King.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE APRIL MEETING: The sixty-third regular meeting of the Association was held on April 13th, in the Assembly Hall of the San Francisco Public Library, with President Kibbe in the chair; Mrs. Carl R. Smith acting as Secretary; thirteen members and fifteen guests in attendance.

A communication from Dr. E. W. Nelson, Chief of Bureau of Biological Survey, was read, in which attention was called to precautionary instructions given in the bird-banding pamphlet of the Bureau for the purpose of guarding against injuries to birds entering the traps. President Kibbe commented briefly upon the subject, disclaiming any opposition to competent trappers, but regretting the broadcast solicitation of the general public and the widespread advertising of "Government" patterns of traps, for the purpose of catching "sparrows," without qualification of the name or warning of imminent danger to native birds. Dr. Badé emphasized the impropriety of conducting trapping operations during the breeding season, when eggs or young demanded the constant ministrations of mother birds.

The attention of members was directed to the line of "air-cooled bird houses" designed by Mr. E. A. Gilman, 519 E. Conant St., Portage, Wisconsin, for the protection of birds in localities where the intense heat of early summer threatens the destruction of the young. Mr. Gilman will furnish photographs and description of his designs for the nominal sum of twenty-five cents each.

The feature of the evening was an address by our Honorary President, Dr. William F. Badé, President of the Sierra Club, on "The Birds of Hawaii." It is to be regretted that we are unable to give a stenographic report of this very enjoyable lecture, which may be briefly summarized as follows:

The Hawaiian area may be divided into four zones, viz.:

I. Lowland Zone, between sea level and an altitude of 500 feet. Here are found no indigenous birds. The English sparrow flourishes and huge crowds will gather nightly in a tree. One could kill as many as five with one well-directed stone. Unfortunately, these unwelcome intruders are spreading into the next zone. Other typical species at the low level are *munia nisoria*, colloquially known as the Chinese sparrow, and a sub-species of the Mexican purple finch, which, with the English sparrow form a trio to which the general term "rice birds" is applied. These three birds are very destructive and rice-growers find it necessary to conduct a continuous campaign against their depredations. As it is impracticable to attempt their destruction, efforts are made to frighten them away by means of strings of tin cans, festooned through the rice fields and rattled upon occasion by watchers stationed in elevated sentry boxes.

II. Lower Forest Zone, lying between altitudes of 500 and 1500 feet. Here the kukui tree grows, the fruit of which serves as an edible nut, a candle or a torch. Rain falls on the windward side to the extent of 180 inches per annum. Typical birds are the Mynah, Chinese Turtle Dove, Chinese Pheasant and Mongolian Thrush.

III. Middle Forest Zone, between altitudes of 1500 and 6000 feet. The rainfall reaches as much as 200 inches on the windward side, with temperature ranging between 32° and 65°. Here are found the passerine birds, including many rare species.

IV. Upper Forest Zone, stretching from 6000 to 9000 feet, includes most of the volcanoes. A characteristic bird is the Hawaiian Goose, which inhabits the grassy uplands in the higher altitudes, feeding for the most part on berries. These birds are easily tamed and play with children as a dog might. They are highly esteemed as a game bird, and a defective law which permits them to be hunted during their breeding season, bids fair to result in the extinction of such of them as survive the depredations of the mongoose.

These islands have long been noted for the beauty of their native birds, whose skins have been held sacred to the use of royalty and other nobility, for ceremonial robes, many of which, of incredible richness, are still preserved. The surviving birds, however, are wary and resent observation and disturbance, so that the casual visitor may form no conception of the bird population.

In all, some sixty or sixty-five Hawaiian birds have been described. Of these, sixteen species are considered definitely extinct, and five or six others are probably so. Of the remaining species, one-half will probably become so, as the result of various hostile forces or lack of adaptability. The disappearing species are apparently highly specialized with reference to environment and food and will not, or cannot, tolerate changes in either. One little green finch is confined to an area of three or four square miles. Some of the birds will leave their accustomed grounds if trees are felled or a road cut through. Clearing away the trees has also had the effect of restricting the normal food supply. Cattle disturb the birds and ruin certain undergrowth which the birds require. Cats and dogs run wild and take their toll. The Pseudonestor, a finch-like bird, occurs only on the island of Maui, at altitudes of 4000 feet upward. Its principal food consists of larvæ found on the koa trees. Some moth has attacked these trees and they are dying. When they go, these birds will disappear.

Dr. Badé presented a lengthy indictment of the Mynah, which was introduced in the hope that it would feed on the cut-worms. But the Mynah preferred insects, with fruits for second choice, and a partiality for figs, grapes and the lemon guava, all of which it has damaged greatly. The Mynah has taken very kindly to the islands, and has spread everywhere, except the highest peaks. The English Sparrows nest in close proximity, and the two get along pretty well together. The Mynahs are very numerous and thirty or forty could be counted from his residence at any time. A big banyan tree hard-by would be filled with the birds every evening, making a great commotion. While they are quiet at night, they are noisy at all other times. They are omnivorous and eat eggs and young birds, damaging much that they do not consume. They will find their way into a pigeon cote and dump out the eggs and the young birds. The lantana, which is a small garden plant in the Eastern States, and is very susceptible to frosts here in California, develops into a sizable tree in the tropics and prospers mightily in Hawaii. The Mynah is fond of its fruit, and has consequently sowed its seeds all over the islands. A pest was sought to attack and control the spreading of the lantana and an insect has been found which kills the seeds, so that it is hoped that this particular invasion will be abated. The Mynah must therefore be recognized as a serious menace to the native birds.

The Hawaiian islands would seem to offer highly aggravated examples of the dangers attendant upon the intrusion of exotic animal or plant life, for whatever purpose. The mongoose, introduced to assist in the extermination of rats, has demonstrated, like the Mynah, a taste for other diet and thus constitutes perhaps the greatest present menace to native bird life. It has increased enormously, is nocturnal, and exterminates the ground nesting birds wherever it goes. It has extended its habitat up to an altitude of 8000 feet and now threatens the goose. It has not yet reached the island of Kauai, and here the birds are still holding their own.

The three most distinctive Hawaiian birds are: The *apapane*, blood-red in color, of good size, somewhat like the thrasher, found in the crater of Kilauea, where groups of these birds will gather at noon in the ohia trees and sing together; the *iiwi*, brilliant scarlet in color, of the size and shape of our tanager and the *amakihi*, a smaller green finch, yellow underneath. All three birds are honey and insect eaters.

Other notable birds mentioned by Dr. Badé are the Tropic birds which nest in the high cliffs of the larger crater of Kilauea, and a friendly little bird, the *elepaio*, which builds a dainty little nest somewhat larger than that of a humming bird. The latter seems to have occupied a position in the Hawaiian mind somewhat analogous to that of the classical oracles. When the islanders undertook the construction of a war canoe, they would select an appropriate tree for the purpose, but work might not be started upon the canoe until an *elepaio* had lit upon the tree and sung his approval of the enterprise.

The meeting closed with informal discussion and expressions of appreciation of the very entertaining and instructive address.

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HAWKS AND OWLS IN THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT

It is well known that barn owls in some numbers nest in warehouses and lofts to which they find access, between Montgomery St. and the water front. Some five years ago, an immature barn owl was found at mid-day, perched on a picture in an office on the ninth floor of the Alaska Commercial Building, corner California and Sansome Sts. When he entered was not known, but it was thought that one of the windows might have been left open during the night. When approached, the bird would bend his head down until his beak was between his legs, and rustle his wings, after the fashion of a contortionist picking up a handkerchief off the floor with his mouth.

On the eve of his departure for South America, Mr. C. B. Lastreto last month submitted the following note: I have recently observed, on one occasion or another, what I diagnose as a sparrow-hawk, flying into the eaves of the roof of the Liverpool & London & Globe Building, corner of California and Leidesdorff Sts. From my window, (corner of California and Battery Sts.), I occasionally see a sparrow-hawk perched on the flag pole of the Battery Building, west side of Battery St., between California and Pine, and also flying into the eaves of the Robert Dollar Building, corner of California and Battery Sts. About four or five days ago I observed three sparrow-hawks flying around together or after each other in this locality. Unfortunately I have neither time nor facilities for investigating as to whether they are nesting or as to what they may secure in their foraging for food.

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APRIL FIELD TRIP: Of the three localities visited each Spring by the Association,—Marin County, Niles Canyon and Lafayette, each has its own peculiar charm. Niles canyon has scenery and flowers, the big forested bend at Farwell, the blazing stars, differing from those encountered in the Tamalpais region. Its birds, too, seem more of the wild than those of Lafayette.

The April trip was taken to the Canyon on Sunday the 23d. Five of the party arrived at Niles by train as per schedule. Some bird-lovers evidently overslept and came on a late bus, while two started early enough but failed to wake up at Niles and were carried on to Milpitas. At 10:30 the various groups joined forces and followed up the creek bed and along the highway to Farwell. Side trips were taken up Stony Canyon and farther up the creek. Most of the party returned by train to San Francisco and Oakland.

The day yielded a fair bird list, forty-three species in all. A large hawk with white upper tail feathers, soared above the hills at Farwell. It was probably a rough-leg, but could not be definitely identified. The following birds were seen by San Francisco members: Glaucous-winged, western, California and Bonaparte gulls; scaup, white-winged and surf scoters and sandpipers; Hudsonian curlew. Land birds seen: Turkey vulture, western red-tail, belted kingfisher and red-shafted flicker; black phoebe, horned lark, Coast and California jays; bi-colored red-wing, meadowlark, Bullock oriole and Brewer blackbird; house finch, willow goldfinch, green-backed goldfinch, Nuttall, golden-crowned and song sparrows; San Francisco and California towhees, black-headed grosbeak, lazuli bunting, barn and bank swallows; cedar waxwing, California shrike, warbling vireo, California yellow and pileolated warblers; California thrasher, western house wren, plain titmouse, California bush-tit and wren-tit.

Members present were Mesdemoiselles Ames, Ayer, Baily, Cassiday, Fritts and King; Mrs. Thomas; Messrs. Rapp and Thomas. As guests, Mesdemoiselles Elma Baily, Pettit and H. E. Roe; Mesdames Baily, Howard and Oliver. Nine members and six guests.

C. R. THOMAS.

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

FOR THE STUDY AND THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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Meets second Thursday of each month, at 8:00 p.m., in Assembly Hall of San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets.

Address Bulletin correspondence to President.

Subscription to Bulletin alone, 35c per year. Single copies 5c